

on 02 October 2012



Divers checking the reef and carrying out reef cleaning activities at the Talang Satang Island National Park near Sematan recently.

Seagrass find 'a boon for turtles'

KUCHING: A "huge seagrass" patch has been discovered at a depth of between 9.1m to 12.2m off Pulau Talang Talang Besar near Sematan.

The patch was found during a reef cleaning and reef ball monitoring exercise carried out jointly by the Sarawak Forestry Corporation and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak students and volunteer divers two weeks ago.

The discovery is a significant find in the conservation of the endangered turtles as seagrass is an important diet of sea turtles.

The managing director and chief executive officer of the Sarawak Forestry Corporation Datuk Ali Yusop said the discovery was a good indication that the reef ball project, that was started in 1998, had successfully prevented trawlers from encroaching the waters off the island.

Talang Talang Besar is an important turtle nesting island in the state.

Ali said the reef cleaning and reef ball monitoring had promoted the growth of the seagrass, the main diet of Green Turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) and dugongs (*dugong dugon*).

The cleaning and monitoring of the reef balls, aimed at inculcating awareness on the importance of reef and marine life as well as to promote collaboration and constructive partnership between corporation and the public in the protection and conservation of marine creatures, was held in conjunction with Malaysia Day celebrations.

This is the third consecutive year this exercise was organised.

"Coral reefs conservation is vital for the wellbeing of marine life.

"In Malaysia, the Federal Government has taken the initiative in conserving coral reefs by gazetting the majority of them as marine parks."

He added that compared with past years, not much rubbish was collected during the exercise this year.

Source : **NewStraitsTimes**